

Dear Scotts Bluff County Commissioners,

Now that it's fair week, I wanted to share this with you. I was excited to be asked to serve on the Scotts Bluff/Morrill County Extension board because I had good memories of participating in 4H. As a board member, I soon recognized that University of Nebraska Extension is designed to meet the needs of all Nebraskans, not just rural kids involved in 4H.

At its core, extension is the link between the researchers at the universities and the citizens of the state. University researchers share their knowledge with the Extension Educators who share it throughout the state. The three pillars of Nebraska Extension focus on agriculture and food systems, inspiring Nebraskans and their communities, and the health and well-being of Nebraskans.

These pillars are an umbrella for education in many different subjects including production agriculture, small businesses, early childhood development, gardening, and robotics. I looked at UNL Extension's website, and I found a link to healthy and quick meal tips specifically for bachelor farmers. What a practical idea! I also read about Rural Prosperity working with small business owners to help them develop business plans. Extension is for children too.

I have four kids, and watching them explore the world in those early years was the most satisfying time I had as a parent. Not all families are able to afford a stay-at-home parent, or even quality childcare. We are very much the product of our upbringings, and people who came from chaotic childhoods might have a difficult time understanding how to provide a safe place for their children to learn and explore.

Little kids are sponges. As a librarian, I can tell which children were read to when they were little. If parents weren't read to as children, they are unlikely to read to their own children; they may let their children watch a lot of television instead. If children have access to quality TV programming like Mr Rogers, they learn about their emotions and what they mean. If children spend their time watching Sponge Bob when they are little, they won't have those social and emotional skills when they start school. Fortunately, extension has programs to help early childhood educators teach little ones about all those feelings and how to get along with their peers. In the long run, this helps them become better students and productive citizens.

At the Gering Library I know I can count on Scotts Bluff County Extension to be willing to develop and present programs on all kinds of topics. In past years, I have used Extension Educators to present programs on robots to residents of Heritage Estates and a class for adults with developmental disabilities. Other extension programs lately have included what issues your lawn may have after a very snowy winter, safe food preservation, and how to start tomato seeds at home.

Our UNL Extension is a jewel that Nebraskans can be proud of. I am grateful for the support from you, the Scotts Bluff County Commissioners.

Sincerely,

Sherry Preston

Vice President Scotts Bluff/Morrill County Extension Board

